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ABSTRACT

Project RAISE (Rural America Institute for Special Educators) is a preservice teacher training program specifically designed for preparing special educators for the demands of rural settings. The project is being conducted by the Department of Special Education at Bowling Green State University and concentrates on training special educators in a 12-county region in northwest Ohio. Based on needs assessments, it was found that rural Ohio school districts have difficulty hiring and retaining special educators. Project RAISE selects students who are most likely to remain in rural settings once trained. The project faculty include faculty from related fields who aid in developing consultative and collaborative skills. Five undergraduate seniors majoring in special education and five practicing special education teachers from five rural school systems are selected for the training project. The undergraduate students are paired with the special education teachers. After the students have completed their student teaching and graduated, they enroll in the graduate program in special education along with their partner teachers. The practicing teacher and preservice teacher alternate on campus coursework and classroom teaching (practicum) in 8-week blocks for a year. Participants have evaluated the program positively in the areas of organization, materials, course goals, and faculty. The paper includes descriptions of the course components of the program. (KS)

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Ellen Williams
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Project RAISE: Rural America Institute for Special Education--A Preservice Teacher Training Program for Rural Special Education

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Project RAISE: Rural America Institute for Special Educators - A Preservice Teacher Training Program for Rural Special Education

INTRODUCTION

Project RAISE (Rural America Institute for Special Educators) is a unique preservice teacher training program specifically designed for preparing special educators for the demands of rural settings. The project is being conducted by the Department of Special Education at Bowling Green State University and concentrates on training special educators in a twelve county region in northwest Ohio. The Northwest Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center (SERRC) has identified the school systems within this twelve county region as being predominantly rural.

National Needs for Training in Rural Special Education

As we begin the decade of the 1990's, we are faced with the need to provide more appropriate training for special education teachers for rural settings. This training project attempts to address this need.

On a national level, there is evidence of a shortage in the teaching field of special education. According to the 1988 annual report from the Association for School, College and University Staffing (ASCUS), there is a considerable shortage in the supply of special education teachers based on relative demand. Those special education fields with the greatest teacher shortages are in the areas of emotionally disturbed, learning disabilities, and multihandicapped (Akin, 1988). Thus, there continues to be a need for training special education teachers at the preservice level in order to ameliorate the supply and demand discrepancy.

With approximately 67% of the nation's 16,000 public school districts being classified as "rural" (Sher, 1978), it would seem imperative to continue addressing the educational needs of rural America. Rural school environments have been characterized as: having higher poverty levels than nonrural settings; increasing in population; and not having increases in tax bases. Rural schools have been characterized as: having scarce professional resources, having costlier services than urban areas due to transportation requirements and staffing needs, and serving greater percentages of handicapped students than urban areas (Helge, 1984).

While the passage of Public Law 94-142 (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) has helped in increasing the number of handicapped students being identified and served in rural areas, there are still numerous problems inherent within the special education delivery systems for rural America. National research conducted under the auspices of the U.S. Office of Special Education

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in 1983 revealed the following major problems in serving rural handicapped students: funding inadequacies; negative attitudes toward handicapped students; recruiting qualified staff; long distances between schools and services; retention of qualified staff; service provision for low-incidence handicaps; transportation inadequacies; involving parents; staff development needs; resistance to change; providing support services; and, professional isolation (Helge, 1984). Additional information from this study revealed that most teacher training institutions do not address special rural needs and circumstances in training personnel to work with rural handicapped students. This study also articulated an expressed need for providing training in generalizable noncategorical skills for special education personnel because most rural special educators are working with numerous handicapping conditions with limited specialists available.

Another critical concern relative to rural special education personnel is their high attrition rate. It has been reported that there is a 20% annual attrition rate nationally for special education teachers. In rural areas, that attrition rate can range as high as 30%-60% especially for personnel in specialized areas such as speech and physical therapists and for itinerant teachers serving low-incidence populations (McIntosh, 1986). This high attrition rate may be reduced if teachers are trained at the preservice level to work with rural special populations. It has been postulated that if rural personnel are specifically trained to work with rural handicapped, they will have greater personal and professional success (Marrs, 1984).

State of Ohio Needs for Training in Rural Special Education

Based on information from Ohio's Comprehensive System of Professional Development (CSPD) plan (October 1988), Ohio's institutions of higher education graduated 1,754 special education personnel in 1987. Projections for graduates in special education for 1988 and 1989 were 1,850 and 1,925, respectively. While it might appear that Ohio teacher training institutions are producing an adequate number of special education personnel, it should be noted that Ohio's State Division of Teacher Education and Certification had to issue 1,225 temporary special education certificates from January 1 through December 31, 1988.

Two related personnel training needs at the state level which are relevant to this project include new state requirements for teacher certification. As of July 1, 1987, all first year teachers must complete a one-year entry-year program under the mentorship of certified, experienced teachers. These new regulations also require that certification renewals from professional to permanent certification will require applicants to acquire a Master's degree.

Regional Needs for Training in Rural Special Education

The Northwest Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center (SERRC) services an area of 13 counties. This SERRC has identified twelve of its 13 counties as being predominantly rural in their service delivery systems of education. Within this regional area of northwest Ohio, there is a total Average Daily Membership of 175,912 students of which 11% or 19,366 students have been identified as

handicapped. With nearly 20,000 special needs students being served in the twelve county area, it should be noted that there are a number of teachers who have been hired to teach these special education classes are under temporary certification.

Based on information reported from the Northwest Ohio SERRC in the Summer of 1988 (Ratliffe, 1988), the following special education personnel shortage was reported for the 1987-88 school year in the 13 counties of Northwest Ohio:

Area	Personnel Shortage
Preschool (age 3-5 years) Special education teachers, itinerant/ consulting teachers, home/hospital teachers	15 FTE
School (age 6-21 years)	
Deaf Blind	.05 FTE
Multihandicapped	26 FTE
Hearing Handicapped	0 FTE
Visually Handicapped	1.8 FTE
Orthopedically/Other Health Handicapped	0 FTE
Severe Behavior Handicapped	16 FTE
Developmentally Handicapped	9 FTE
Specific Learning Disabilities	35.1 FTE

In an attempt to provide further documentation for a regional need for special education preparation for rural settings, letters of support from regional personnel were elicited, and obtained. Additionally, a needs assessment was disseminated to northwest Ohio county superintendents, selected building principals, selected special education teachers, and selected special education supervisors. These surveys were developed to gain information on the needs found in rural special education within the twelve county area in northwest Ohio.

The superintendents' surveys were sent to each of the twelve county superintendents and to each of the twelve county boards of mental retardation school superintendents in northwest Ohio (N = 24). Based on a 71% return rate (N = 17), the following results were compiled relative to rural special education:

- 100% of the respondents self-identified as having primarily rural school districts within their county;
- 76% indicated it was difficult to hire qualified special education teachers for rural areas (particularly in the areas of severe behavior handicaps, multihandicapped and developmentally handicapped);
- 53% found it difficult to retain (for longer than 3 years) special education teachers for rural areas (particularly in the areas of severe behavior handicaps, multihandicapped and developmentally handicapped);
- the average percentage of special education teachers in these counties holding master's degrees is 32%;
- 88% of the respondents indicated that they found it difficult to hire qualified support personnel (particularly in the areas of physical therapy, occupational therapy, school psychology

and adapted physical education;
- 53% of the respondents found it difficult to retain (longer than 3 years) qualified support personnel (particularly in the areas of physical therapy, occupational therapy, school psychology and adapted physical education.

The superintendents selected the following factors contributing to the difficulty in hiring/retaining qualified special education teaches and support personnel for rural areas: 70% salary; 59% lack of certificated personnel; 53% travel distances; 29% social isolation; 24% professional isolation; 24% career opportunities; 24% lack of training for rural settings; and, 24% conservatism of rural communities.

The second survey was sent to four educators (two administrators or supervisors in special education and two special education teachers) in each of the twelve rural counties in northwest Ohio. Based on a return rate of 64% (N = 29), the following information was compiled:

- the average number of years working in a rural education setting for respondents was 10.8 years;
- some reasons cited by survey participants for selecting rural employment included: more contact with colleagues, less red tape, hometown, husband's employment, challenge of meeting money needs, first job offer, likes rural kids and schools better than urban, good area to raise family, and comfortable because they grew up in rural area;
- some of the disadvantages of working in rural educational settings cited were: small number of low incidence handicaps cause transportation and funding problems, isolation from other special education contacts, limited special education options, multiple responsibilities, lack of support services, limited resources, and low salary;
- some of the advantages of working in rural education included: freedom to develop creative program options; lack of bureaucracy; fewer problems with parents; better communication between faculty, staff, administration; smaller class sizes; and, greater community support;
- 93% of the respondents reported that they had no formal coursework or inservice training specifically relative to providing special education in a rural setting;
- 66% reported that they would participate in coursework or inservice programs on rural special education if they were offered.

The following represent the teaching competencies most frequently selected by participants as being important: (the percentage of respondents selecting the competency is noted).

%	Competency
83	Application on behavioral analysis to student behavior
79	Using curricula for program planning
76	Knowledge of alternative teaching strategies
72	Selection and adaptation of appropriate academic materials
69	Using local employment needs to develop vocational training

%	Competency (Cont'd.)
69	Selection/administration of appropriate assessment tools
66	Use of consultation with parents
62	Age appropriate skill training
59	Use of medical emergency intervention strategies
59	Application of time management strategies
59	Coordination of multifactored assessment activities
59	Use of consultation with peers
55	Use of alternative communication systems
55	Behavioral analysis for academic/vocational training
45	Federal/state mandates for educating handicapped students
41	Selecting adaptive devices for physical/cognitive development
41	Designing adaptive devices for physical/cognitive development

Participants also selected the following as important services in which special educators should be skilled in assisting with carry-over supplemental services:

%	Service Areas
76	Language development therapy
72	Occupational therapy
66	Physical therapy
66	Speech therapy
66	Guidance and counseling
62	Adaptive physical education
55	Music therapy
48	Art therapy
38	Mobility orientation

Project RAISE was then designed to address the needs of improving special education services delivery in rural areas. As training programs prepare special educators for rural settings, special education systems in rural America will reflect improved service delivery at program and instructional levels. In this type of system, there is likely to be a reduction in personnel recruitment problems and an amelioration of retention problems, as well as an increase in the quality and quantity of services being provided for handicapped infants, children, and youth.

PROJECT RAISE: THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Project and Program Goals

This preservice training program for rural special education personnel has been designed to utilize knowledge and skills from both special education and rural education. In addition, this program has been designed to incorporate the rural special education classroom as a vital training component. In other words, the design of this program has taken into account the rich resource provided by direct experience in rural special education settings. Further, this program has been designed to directly influence the problems associated with retention of rural special education personnel. As will be seen when

examining the criteria for participant selection, maximum emphasis has been placed on locating and training those participants most likely to remain in rural special education settings for three or more years. It should also be noted that all participants of Project RAISE are considered preservice relative to training specifically for rural special education.

Specific goals. 1. To train teachers to effectively meet the academic, social, vocational, and ancillary service needs of rural special education students.

2. To improve the quality of training to rural special education preservice trainees.

3. To assist in the recruitment and retention of teaching personnel specifically trained for rural special education.

Program objectives. 1.1 To establish project staff.

1.2 To recruit project trainees from both the senior level undergraduate student population, and from the existing practicing rural special education personnel.

1.3 To obtain a commitment from rural school districts with participating practicing special educators to allow teaming of a preservice teacher with a practicing teacher and on-the-job practica.

1.4 To train teachers to effectively meet the needs of rural special education settings.

1.5 To maintain, beyond the funding of this project, a training program to meet the specific needs of rural special education teachers.

2.1 To provide content coursework, practicum experiences, and other educational experiences which are specifically designed to develop and enhance skills and abilities of personnel for practice in rural special education settings.

2.2 To obtain materials and resources that facilitate participants in achieving knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for teaching in a rural special education setting.

3.1 To increase the number of special education teaching personnel with training for rural special education settings.

3.2 To increase the likelihood that those trained specifically for rural special education will be employed and remain in service in rural areas.

Recruitment of Students

Special education personnel shortages in northwest Ohio are resultant from an inability to attract, employ, and retain qualified special educators serving multihandicapped and severe behaviorally handicapped students. However, recent research suggests that individuals currently living in rural areas are more likely to commit themselves to service there. Of the 79 counties represented by students at BGSU, 74 are rural. Further, all rural counties within the Project RAISE service area have BGSU students residing within them who have declared a special education major. Thus, there is an ample pool of students who reside in rural areas from which to select project participants on a statewide or local basis.

Project RAISE attracts a significant number of well-qualified students from all rural counties of Ohio. The Project's association

with the Department of Special Education at BGSU allows it to profit from an earned reputation for "state-of-the-art" teacher training programs and is able to attract very capable students as a result. Project RAISE benefits from its affiliation with the Department relative to the selection of preservice project applicants from a qualified pool of candidates, and allows selection of those graduate degree candidates that are most likely to remain in rural settings once trained.

Project Faculty

In addition to the instructional roles of the project co-directors, additional faculty have been selected for participation in the project from the Departments of Foundation and Inquiry, and Administration and Supervision in the College of Education and Allied Professions as well as the Physical Therapy Program and Department of Communication Disorders in the College of Health and Human Services. The role of these staff members has been to: 1) use needs assessment data gathered by the project co-directors to develop or enhance training modules which promote integration of ancillary service in special education programs; 2) develop communication and consultation skills necessary for continued collaboration between parents, administrators, medical personnel, ancillary school personnel and special educators; 3) teach special educators professional competencies related to their discipline necessary for collaborative efforts between special educators and ancillary personnel; and, 4) work with project evaluators to determine whether coursework and practice experiences lead to improved integration of ancillary services in special educational programs of handicapped students.

Pre-Training Program

First five students are selected from among undergraduate seniors majoring in special education. The previously outlined recruitment criteria is applied to these candidates. At the same time, five school systems in Northwest Ohio which meet the criteria for rural school systems, and which employ special education personnel are selected for participation in the project. Contracts for the use of these rural special education sites as practicum sites are established during this phase of the project.

In cooperation with the administrators and teachers of the five rural school systems in Northwest Ohio identified for participation in the training project, five practicing special education teachers are selected for participation in the project. Again, the criteria enumerated above for recruitment of participants will be employed here in order to better ensure retention of trained personnel in the rural settings. Furthermore, the practicing rural special education teachers selected for participation in this project are viewed as preservice in the sense that these participants have not experienced previous training specifically for rural special education. Selection of all participants occurs during the fall academic semester.

An advisory board comprised of parents of youth who are handicapped and educated by rural schools, administrators of rural school systems, teachers -- both special and regular -- from rural school systems, Project RAISE faculty, and identified student

participants is given the charge to advise and critique project development and implementation

An informational conference is held during the later part of the fall academic term. The purpose of this conference is to advise all identified participants in Project RAISE (i.e., the five identified senior undergraduate students, the five practicing rural special education teachers, the members of the advisory board, and the established interdisciplinary teaching faculty) of the scope and sequence of the program in which they are participating.

During the spring academic semester, the five identified senior undergraduate students are placed with the five practicing special education teachers for completion of the student teaching requirement prior to these senior students' graduation and certification. This allows the development of five teams, each comprised of a practicing rural special education teacher and a senior undergraduate student who is completing requirements for certification in special education. Along with this student teaching experience and development of teams, special seminars are scheduled in order to aid in the bonding between student teacher and practicing teacher, to aid in understanding the needs of rural special educators, and to assist communication between participants of the project and the project staff.

Graduate Training Program

During the summer, an educational institute for the identified participants is held. All participants (it should be noted that the senior undergraduate participants who have been student teaching with the practicing rural special education teachers have graduated following the spring semester; these students then matriculate into the graduate program in special education for the remainder of their participation in the project; further, it should be noted that these formerly undergraduate students are henceforth referred to as preservice teachers to avoid confusing them with the identified practicing rural special education teachers) are in residence at BGSU for a summer educational institute through which each participant accrues 13 semester hours of graduate credit, applicable toward a Master of Education in Special Education degree with a specialization in rural special education. The coursework involved in this institute provides instruction in statistics and research methodology, foundations and instructional strategies in rural special education, problems and issues in rural special education, and advisement on the graduate program (EDFI 596: Statistics in Education; EDFI 597: Research in Education; EDSE 549: Problems and Issues for Personnel in Rural Special Education; EDSE 580: Foundations and Instructional Strategies for Rural Special Education; and, EDSE 580: Professional Development Seminar in Special Education). As a part of this coursework, participant teams (formed by a preservice teacher and a practicing rural special education teacher) in Project RAISE identify and plan research projects which expand knowledge and abilities regarding rural special education, and are carried out during the next academic year.

During the next academic year, the preservice teacher and the practicing rural special education teacher continue to function as a team in providing instruction to special education students in the

participants have accrued a grand total (including those hours accumulated during the previous summer) of 37 semester hours of credit.

This group of participants then complete the project during the following summer term by completing their research projects. They accomplish this by enrolling in EDSE 599: Thesis Research for 3 semester hours of credit. Upon completion of this experience, and the summer term, all five preservice teachers and all five practicing rural special education teachers graduate from Bowling Green State University each with a Master of Education in Special Education degree with specialization in rural special education.

Program Content

The following discussion provides the reader with information concerning the specific content and organization of Project RAISE. This discussion includes delineation of the courses and practica participants experience during Project RAISE; the competencies that emphasized throughout this training program that specifically address the needs of rural special education teaching personnel; explanation of the demonstration or practicum experiences in which trainees participate for the purpose of evaluating learning and application; incorporation of current research on the needs of rural special education teaching personnel; and, learner outcomes and their evaluation.

Program competencies.

EDSE 549: Problems and Issues for Personnel in Rural Special Education, includes the global concepts and competencies identified by Helge (1983), and elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to an "understanding of the context of a rural school and its environment," and, "knowledge concerning the state-of-the-art of rural special education," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDSE 580: Foundations and Instructional Strategies for Rural Special Education, includes the global concepts and competencies identified by Helge (1983), and elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to "understanding the differences involved in serving handicapped students in rural and urban environments," and, "knowledge of effective service delivery models for rural handicapped children (including low-incidence handicaps such as severely emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, and visually impaired)," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDSE 580: Advanced Instructional Design for Rural Special Education, includes the global competency identified by Helge (1983), and elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to "an awareness of alternate resources to provide services to rural handicapped students and skills to identify alternate resources," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational Services - I, includes the global competency identified by Helge (1983), and elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to developing "skills in working with citizens and agencies in rural communities to facilitate cooperation among schools and service agencies to serve handicapped students," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational Services - II, includes the global competency identified by Helge (1983), and

rural school system. This team continues to operate through assignment to the same classroom and school setting utilized during the student teaching phase of the project.

In addition, both preservice teachers and practicing rural special education teachers return to the university setting for content coursework. The two members of each team rotate between "on-campus" instruction and practicum experience. In this manner, the project attempts to minimize the disruption of the instructional process within the special education classroom. Thus, while one individual of a team is receiving training and coursework at the university, the other is completing practicum assignments in the rural school setting and staffing the rural special education classroom.

The following table delineates the rotation schedule for the members of a team.

Team Schedule

School Term	On Campus for Coursework	Special Education Classroom/Practicum
Summer	Practicing Teacher Preservice Teacher	
Fall (1st 8 weeks)	Preservice Teacher	Practicing Teacher
(2nd 8 weeks)	Practicing Teacher	Preservice Teacher
Spring (1st 8 weeks)	Preservice Teacher	Practicing Teacher
(2nd 8 weeks)	Practicing Teacher	Preservice Teacher

While a participating teacher (either practicing or preservice) is "on-campus" for coursework and training, he/she returns to the rural special education classroom to complete practicum assignments and research activities as well as to maintain the integrity of the handicapped student/teacher relationship.

The coursework taken during the fall and spring semester of the academic year is distributed over the following areas: adapted instructional procedures; selection and design of adapted devices; consultation with parents, support personnel, administration, community resource persons; assessment; speech and language therapy; vocational training; and transition programming. During the fall semester the participants in the project enroll in the following courses and practicum: EDSE 580: Advanced Instructional Design for Rural Special Education; EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational
Services - I; and, EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - I. During the spring semester the participants in the project enroll in the following courses and practicum: EDSE 580: Consultation Skills for Rural Special Education; EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational Services - II; and, EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - II.

During these two semesters the participants of Project RAISE accrue a total of 24 semester hours toward their Master of Education in Special Education degree with specialization in rural special education. Upon successful completion of the spring semester these

elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to demonstrating an "understanding of personal development skills (a) for their own professional growth and (b) to build a local support system in their rural environment," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDSE 580: Consultation Skills for Rural Special Education, includes the global concepts and competencies identified by Helge (1983), and elaborated by Marrs (1984) related to demonstrating "skills in working with parents of rural handicapped students," and, developing "skills in working with peer professionals from rural environments," (Marrs, 1984, p. 338).

EDFI 596: Statistics in Education, provides participants with knowledge and skills related to statistics as a tool in education and research, and includes descriptive statistics, transformation of scores, sampling and probability, linear correlation and regression, introduction to statistical inference, and basic tests of significance. Further, this course provides participants skills in using statistical methods unique to special populations.

EDFI 597: Research in Education, provides participants with knowledge and skills related to research, and includes identification and evaluation of research problems, research designs, use of library resources, data gathering, and writing research reports. Unique to Project RAISE, this course includes the identification and planning of research projects relative to rural special education settings which team members then complete during the later phases of project participation.

EDSE 599: Thesis Research, provides participants with both credit and structure for completion of their research projects defined in EDFI 597.

EDSE 580: Professional Development Seminar in Special Education, provides participants with advisement regarding the graduate program in special education. This course includes information on available support services for graduate students, faculty research, areas of specialization, forms needing attention for completion of graduate studies, and other related topics.

Practicum experiences. The level of a participant's expertise can best be determined by how well s/he integrates what has been learned into everyday experiences. Participants in Project RAISE have the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the environment for which they are being prepared to teach. Authentic practicum situations, rural special education settings, allow the participants to apply what they have learned, and at the same time receive assistance from a supervisor which enables further improvement of skills. Practicum experiences in Project RAISE are scheduled for completion as participants enroll in both EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - I, and EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - II. These practicum experiences are coordinated with the content coursework so that each practicum course emphasizes specific knowledge and skills. Each practicum experience allows for periodic on-site observations, and is evaluated through multiple means (e.g., supervisor evaluation, team teacher evaluation).

EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - I, provides participants with a supervised teaching experience in a rural special education setting. In particular, this practicum experience

emphasizes those skills attained in EDSE 580: Foundations and Instructional Strategies for Rural Special Education, EDSE 580: Advanced Instructional Design for Rural Special Education, and EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational Services - I.

EDSE 562: Practicum in Rural Special Education - II, provides participants with a second supervised teaching experience in a rural special education setting. In particular, this second practicum experience emphasizes those skills attained in EDSE 580: Consultation Skills for Rural Special Education, and EDSE 580: Collaboration for Related Educational Services - II.

It is intended that these practica provide participants with a rich experience in which they are able to display their knowledge and skills attained concerning the provision of special education services for rural school populations. These experiences also provide the project administration, who supervise such experiences, the opportunity to observe and evaluate each participant's learning and application of the identified competencies.

Learner outcomes and their evaluation. Rural special educators may frequently be expected to carry out a number of assignments that are above and beyond the typical job scope of the average special education teacher. These assignments may place the rural special educator in a position where s/he feels somewhat unsure of her/his capabilities because s/he hasn't received training in all of the areas of expectation. Following this need, the learner outcomes of Project RAISE are designed to incorporate such knowledge, skills, and abilities.

As a result of the course of study and the six hours of practicum experience, participants are:

-- proficient in assisting with the use of alternative communication systems;

-- able to use appropriate technologies to design adaptive devices which promote or enhance a student's physical and cognitive development;

-- able to use appropriate technologies to select adaptive devices which promote or enhance a student's physical and cognitive development;

-- able to develop vocational training sequences based on an analysis of local community employment needs;

-- able to apply behavioral analysis procedures to academic and vocational training sequences for students;

-- able to apply behavioral analysis techniques to improve student behavior;

-- able to apply appropriate consultation and communication principles with peers;

-- able to apply appropriate consultation and communication principles with parents;

-- able to select and administer appropriate assessment tools irrespective of student age or handicap;

-- able to coordinate multifactored assessment activities;

-- able to select and adapt academic materials that are appropriate to student age, interest, and ability;

-- able to use both regular and special education curricula for program planning;

-- able to apply alternative teaching methodologies and accommodation strategies;

-- able to provide age appropriate social skill training to students;

-- able to apply time management strategies (e.g., in order to solve scheduling problems);

-- able to apply federal and state mandates for the education of handicapped students;

-- able to use approved medical emergency intervention strategies; and,

-- able to assist in carry-over activities related to supplemental services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, guidance and counseling, art therapy, music therapy, adaptive physical education, and mobility orientation.

Evaluation of these learner outcomes occur through various means. These methods of evaluation include observation of the application of such knowledge, skills, and abilities in practicum settings; quizzes and tests; development of course-related products (e.g., assessment files; behavior analysis programs); and, other means as deemed appropriate through the development of the courses and experiences, and through consultation with related services professionals.

Evaluative Analyses and Problem Areas

Since we are still in our first year of training individuals in Project RAISE, it is a bit early to present evaluative data on the program's effectiveness. Many planned measures of evaluation will only be able to be conducted following completion of the program by the participants. However, course evaluations and qualitative evaluations at the completion of each course and each term have provided some preliminary information.

Participants have reported that each of the courses experienced to date have been above average in organization, the materials employed, the completion of course goals, and the overall evaluation. Furthermore, when asked to evaluate the instructors of the courses and practica, participants have indicated above average evaluation of their interest in students, ability to organize, ability to facilitate, knowledge of course content, provision of feedback, and overall evaluation.

Qualitative comments offered by participants included such statements as, "Useful and practical to my teaching," "Interesting and informative," "I enjoyed meeting with other teachers/professionals to consult," "I think this class is very helpful in learning to work with others for the good of the students," and, "This class can be very useful to us when in the schools." Comments such as these lead us to believe that our training program may be on the right track.

On the other hand, there are several problem areas that will need to be resolved with succeeding groups of participants. For example, the project faculty may have relied too heavily on area administrators to assist in recruiting and selecting practicing teachers for this project. Two of our initial candidates did not remain in the project, and this may have resulted from a

misunderstanding on the part of area administrators in selecting potential candidates. The flexibility required for a practicing teacher to fully share his or her classroom for a year must be understood. Candidates chosen who did not exhibit this flexibility did not continue in the program.

We also lost one of our undergraduate candidates. This was possibly due to the project faculty, when selecting undergraduate candidates, not recognizing the stress that such a program would place on students who have been in higher education for the previous four to five years, and who are experiencing other life alterations (e.g., getting married). The impact of such factors must be realized if the program is to succeed.

One other concern that bears consideration is the method used for determining effective pairings. Even if the above two concerns are answered relative to the selection of project participants, once those participants are selected they must be paired. At present, we are able to test the pairing through the student teaching experience. However, as this project moves away from federal support dollars, some of the more costly aspects of the program may need modification. We are presently attempting to explore ways in which this pairing can be tested or better ensured without the use of the student teaching experience.

CONCLUSION

The need for special educators in rural settings to have more comprehensive preparation is obvious. Many resources, services, and specialized personnel are frequently unavailable to the rural handicapped student on a timely and consistent basis. Consequently, it has been shown that special education staff in rural settings are required to possess broader and more diverse skills, to be more able to operate independent of other special educators and other special education services, and to be highly skilled at adaptation and accommodation, as well as a host of other more specific abilities. In order to address these needs, a preservice teacher training program -- Project RAISE -- has been developed to prepare teachers for service in rural northwest Ohio special education settings.

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